

Mercer Hall Residence  
Columbia, Tennessee

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HABS No. 60-01  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Tennessee

Historic American Buildings Survey  
J. Frazer Smith, District Officer  
W. Jeter Eason, Deputy District Officer  
404 Goodwyn Institute Building, Memphis, Tenn.

"MERCER HALL" (Residence Bishop Jas. Hervey Otey)  
Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee.

Owner. Mr. and Mrs. G. E. McKinnon

Date of Erection. A short time prior to 1820

Architect. Unknown

Builder. Dr. William Leacock

Present Condition. Mercer Hall is not receiving the care that would be necessary to maintain the place in its original condition inasmuch as the cost involved is prohibitive. It is being protected as best the present owners care to, and has survived the ravages of time very well. The part of the house suffering most from lack of care is the service portion. The walls and interior wood work, though very nicely done, are not being preserved so well as they might be.

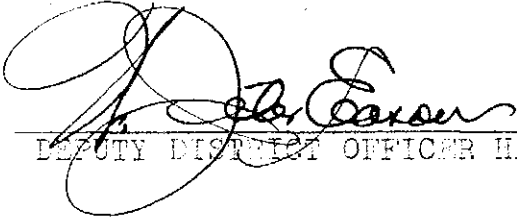
Number of Stories. The major portion, or center part of the house, is two stories and is flanked on either side by one story sections. There is a large cellar, the floor of which at the rear is at ground level, and which is occupied as crude living quarters by an old gentleman who at one time lived, in his youth, in the major part of the house.

Material of Construction. Foundation of stone and brick. Floors hand hewn timber joists, pine wide width flooring. Interior trim - pine, cherry and some marble. Exterior walls and major interior walls - solid brick. Metal low pitched and deck top roofs.

Other Existing Records. Two photographs on this Project. The house is preserved in the records of the Episcopal Church, "Writers' Guide" and the "History of Homes and Gardens of Tennessee" published for The Garden Study Club of Nashville by the Parthenon Press 1936.

Additional Data. Mercer Hall was once the center of a large farm estate most of which has been sold or given away for various reasons, and part of which is now the grounds of, and was given to, Columbia Institute. In architectural shape, Mercer Hall owes its interest to its composition of one and two story sections. It is also distinctive from the fact that it does not have a high predominating roof. The two one story wings on either side of the center feature

indicate an influence which is not often seen in the manor houses of that time and locality. It is very gracefully proportioned and speaks the dignity of the long line of illustrious people who have been associated with it. It is said that it was at one time owned by James K. Polk although it was never occupied by him. Bishop Otey, whose name the house is more closely associated with, was given the house in 1829 as a gift in appreciation for his services in the Episcopal Church by a very good friend, a Doctor Mercer of Natchez, Mississippi, who purchased it from Doctor John E. Hays. It was for this reason that the house was named "Mercer Hall" which name it still bears. This house must, of necessity, be associated with the development of the State of Tennessee along the lines of religion, politics, education and society for it was here that lived the man who, with Bishop Leonidas Polk, founded Columbia Institute for young women and the University of the South at Sewanee, men definitely associated with all of the culture of that time.

  
DEPUTY DISTRICT OFFICER HAAS

Reviewed July 1, '36, T.T.C.